

1896

50 FACTS about the MIDDLE EAST

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THE MIDDLE EAST

	Area (square miles)	Population (estimates)	Population (per square mile)
Egypt	363,200	16,000,000	44
Iran	630,000	15,000,000	23
Iraq	116,000	5,000,000	30
Saudi Arabia	927,000	6,500,000	7
Yemen	74,000	3,500,000	48
Aden and Protectorate	112,000	648,000	6
Persian Gulf Territories	92,200	810,000	9
Syria and Lebanon	60,000	2,537,500	42
Palestine	10,400	1,500,000	142
Transjordan	30,000	300,000	10
Total Middle East	2,414,800	51,795,000	21

For Comparison

Turkey	285,246	14,932,941	52
United Kingdom	93,997	47,000,000	500
Europe	2,085,000	400,000,000	190
United States	3,026,789	135,604,000	44

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50 FACTS about the MIDDLE EAST

THE BACKGROUND

The Middle East—stretching from the Mediterranean Sea almost to India—is a vast region with a population of more than 50,000,000 covering an area of 2,414,800 square miles, more than two-thirds the area of the United States.

1.

Eighty-eight per cent of the Middle East region consists of four large independent states—Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Nine per cent consists of small independent territories closely connected with Britain for many years, and three per cent consists of British and former French mandated territories—Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon—with a small British colony, Aden.

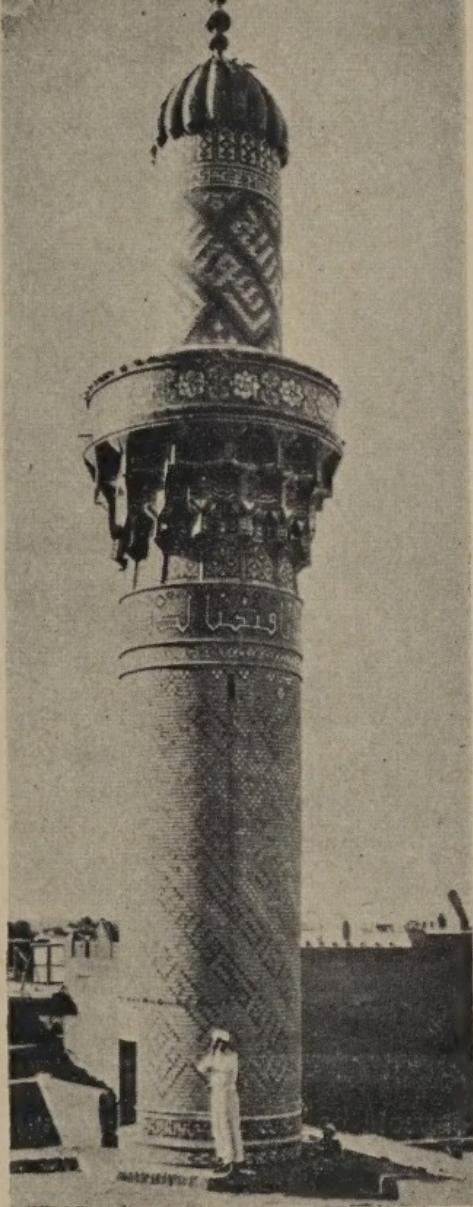
2.

- 3.** For countless centuries, the Middle East has had a profound spiritual influence on history. Modern civilization owes much to the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria and Palestine. One of the main keys to the migration of peoples is the "fertile crescent" of the Middle East. From this region came three religions of mankind—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- 4.** The Middle East is the center of the Moslem faith which imposes a distinctive way of life on its followers. Through the Moslem tradition, the peoples of the Middle East are connected westward with the 14,000,000 Moslems of North Africa and eastward with the 105,000,000 Moslems of Afghanistan and India.
- 5.** The Moslem faith was spread by the conquering Arabs who, from the eighth century onwards, carried their faith and their empire through the Middle East and North Africa into Spain, Italy, other parts of Europe, and eastward towards India. The Arabic language and traditions are

important cultural and political links throughout the whole of the Middle East today.

6. Since Biblical times, the Middle East has been the crossroads of the strategy and commerce of the world, as well as being an important center for the diffusion of learning. In modern times, the region has assumed new importance for sea, land, and air traffic, and for the development of natural resources.

7. The Middle East countries have vast desert areas with fertile

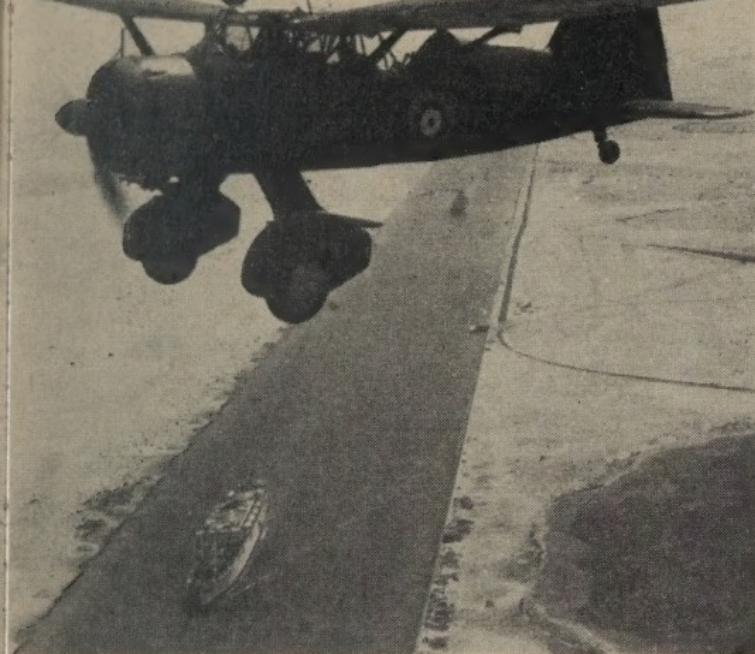


Minaret of Haider Khana Mosque
in Bagdad.

strips intensively cultivated. In the countries there are sharp differences in outlook between settled townsmen and Bedouin nomads. Not until the nineteenth century did a "modern" ruler—Mohammed Ali in Egypt—impose centralized control in a whole territory.

8. **Externally**, the countries of the Middle East have put aside political differences for a growing unity of purpose. Iran and Iraq concluded a four-power pact with Afghanistan and Turkey in 1937. Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen are signatories to a treaty of "Arab brotherhood." Federation of some of the territories has been discussed. All territories have concluded alliances or treaties with Britain, some of very long standing.

9 **Britain's modern interest** in the Middle East goes back to the days of her early trade with India in the eighteenth century. With the development of Australia and New Zealand and of commercial interests in the Far East during the



*British planes
over the Suez
Canal.*

nineteenth century, it became vital to Britain to defend the Middle East as a lifeline of supply and communication.

The strategic importance to Britain of the Middle East lies in four main factors: The Suez Canal, which shortens sea routes by thousands of miles; the military—especially naval and air—bases in the area; the oil supplies; and the airports which British companies built there be-

10.

fore the war in developing air routes to India, South Africa, and Australia.

11. **Commercially**, the importance of the Middle East lies in its oil reserves, in the chemical products of the Dead Sea, and in Egyptian cotton growing. In some cases these products have been developed or purchased by British companies, in other cases by non-British companies, or on a joint basis. In peacetime, the oil is exported to many countries of the world, on a free market.

EGYPT

12. **Egypt**, a key country of the Middle East, is three times as large as New Mexico in total area, but consists of a narrow strip of irrigated land along the 960-mile course of the Nile River, surrounded by desert. During Britain's connection with Egypt, the irrigated area was greatly increased by the construction on the Nile of some of the greatest dams in the world; and the population of Egypt increased from 8,000,000 to 16,000,000.

13.

Commercially, Egypt is important because of her fine cotton growing, and minerals and oil have also been developed. Strategically, Egypt has a dominant position on the Suez Canal. Britain first "occupied" Egypt in 1882 to protect the Canal and trade at a period of great instability. In the years which followed, Britain helped build up Egypt through the successful regulation of the Nile, and through western methods of education, government, and administration.

14.

Britain recognized Egypt as a sovereign independent state in 1922. In 1936, the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance gave Britain twenty years to terminate her maintenance of military forces in Egypt, and kept the Sudan (south of Egypt) under joint control. With Egypt as headquarters for all the crucial Middle East campaigns, these military clauses proved of decisive value to the United Nations, not only in the military struggle but in dealing with problems of the civilian populations of the Middle East.

ARABIA

- 15.** **East of Egypt** is the vast and largely undeveloped Arabian Peninsula, half as large as all Europe, and with a population of about 11,500,000. A great part of the peninsula is ruled by King Ibn Saud, who has unified the four territories of the Nejd, the Hejaz, Asir, and El Hasa under his patriarchal rule, and asserted his authority over the desert tribes. Britain reaffirmed her recognition of Ibn Saud's independence in the Treaty of 1927.
- 16.** **Ibn Saud's prestige** extends beyond his vast territories because of his control over the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, to which millions of Moslem pilgrims flock regularly.
- 17.** **The oil reserves** of Ibn Saud's territories in Arabia are thought by experts to be vast, though estimates vary. A United States company holds concession rights for all areas believed to have oil prospects, and areas of considerable value have already been proved.



King Ibn Saud of Arabia.

Apart from the independent state of Yemen, the small coastal areas of Arabia not under Ibn Saud are either under British protection or in similar close connection with Britain. They include the British colony of Aden, at the entrance to the Red Sea, and the Aden Protectorate; the narrow strip adjacent, the Hadramaut; and the small sultanates and sheikhdoms along the western shores of the Persian Gulf.

18.

- 19.** In protecting the small independent Arab territories of the Persian Gulf, Britain is continuing a policy going back a hundred and forty years, during which time she has patrolled the Persian Gulf to abolish pirates, slave trading, and gun running, and has made these waters safe for navigation and trade. Her special position in the Gulf is recognized by treaty with Ibn Saud.
- 20.**

The Persian Gulf territories have considerable strategic and commercial importance. The British naval base at Bahrein and the airports, developed before the war by Imperial Airways, have been invaluable in the Middle East campaigns in supplying Russia and in the struggle against Japan. Bahrein and Kuwait have considerable oil reserves, the former developed exclusively by American companies, the latter developed jointly, with American companies holding a half share.

IRAN

East of the Persian Gulf, Iran—formerly known as Persia—is a sovereign state almost two and a half times as large as Texas and with a population of about 15,000,000. Riza Shah Pahlevi, who ruled Iran from 1925 to 1941, instituted many far-reaching progressive changes on lines similar to those introduced by Kemal into Turkey. Iran and her neighbors, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey (allied in a four-power pact), constitute an unbroken land mass stretching from Europe almost to India.

21.

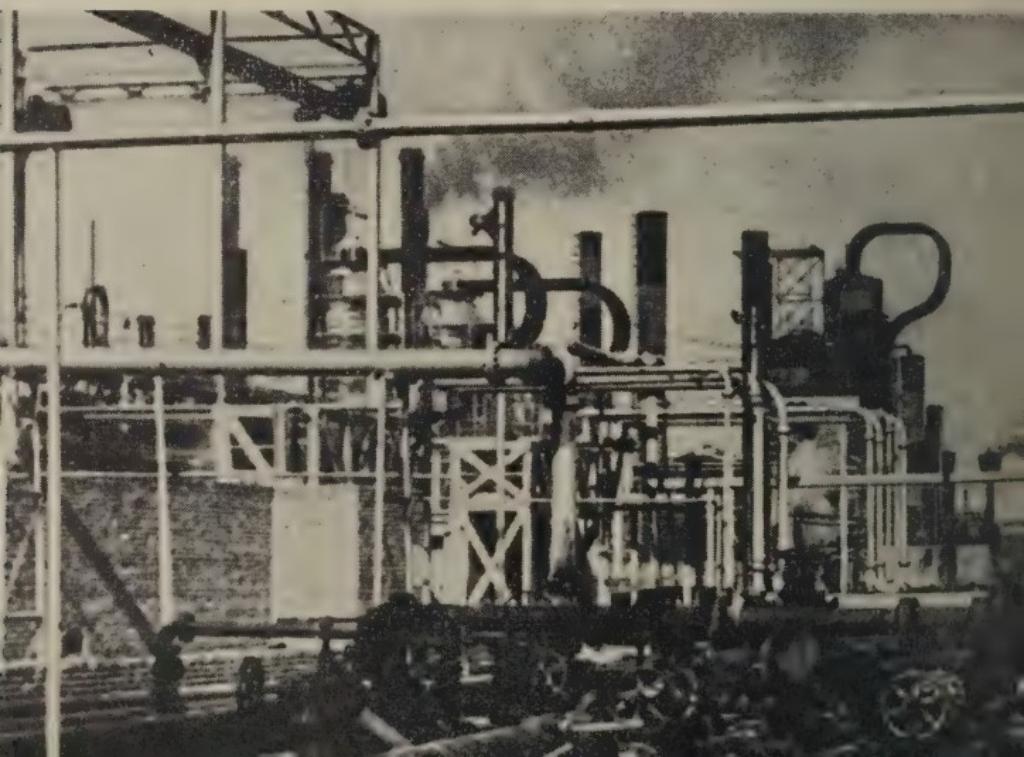
Iran, famous in earlier days for its fine carpets and artistic products, relies today for considerable revenue on its oil reserves, developed by a British company in which the British Government has a large interest. With a production of more than 10,000,000 metric tons of crude petroleum in 1939, Iran ranked fourth among world oil producers, though producing only one-seventeenth as much as the leading country, the United States.

22.

23.

Axis activity in Teheran, capital of Iran, in the early part of the war made it necessary for Britain and Russia to send armed forces into the country in the summer of 1941 when the whole Middle East was in danger. The present Government of Iran cooperates with the United Nations, and at the Teheran Conference in December, 1943, between the United States, Russian and British leaders, an assurance of

Oil refinery at Abadan, Iran.



complete independence for Iran was reaffirmed.

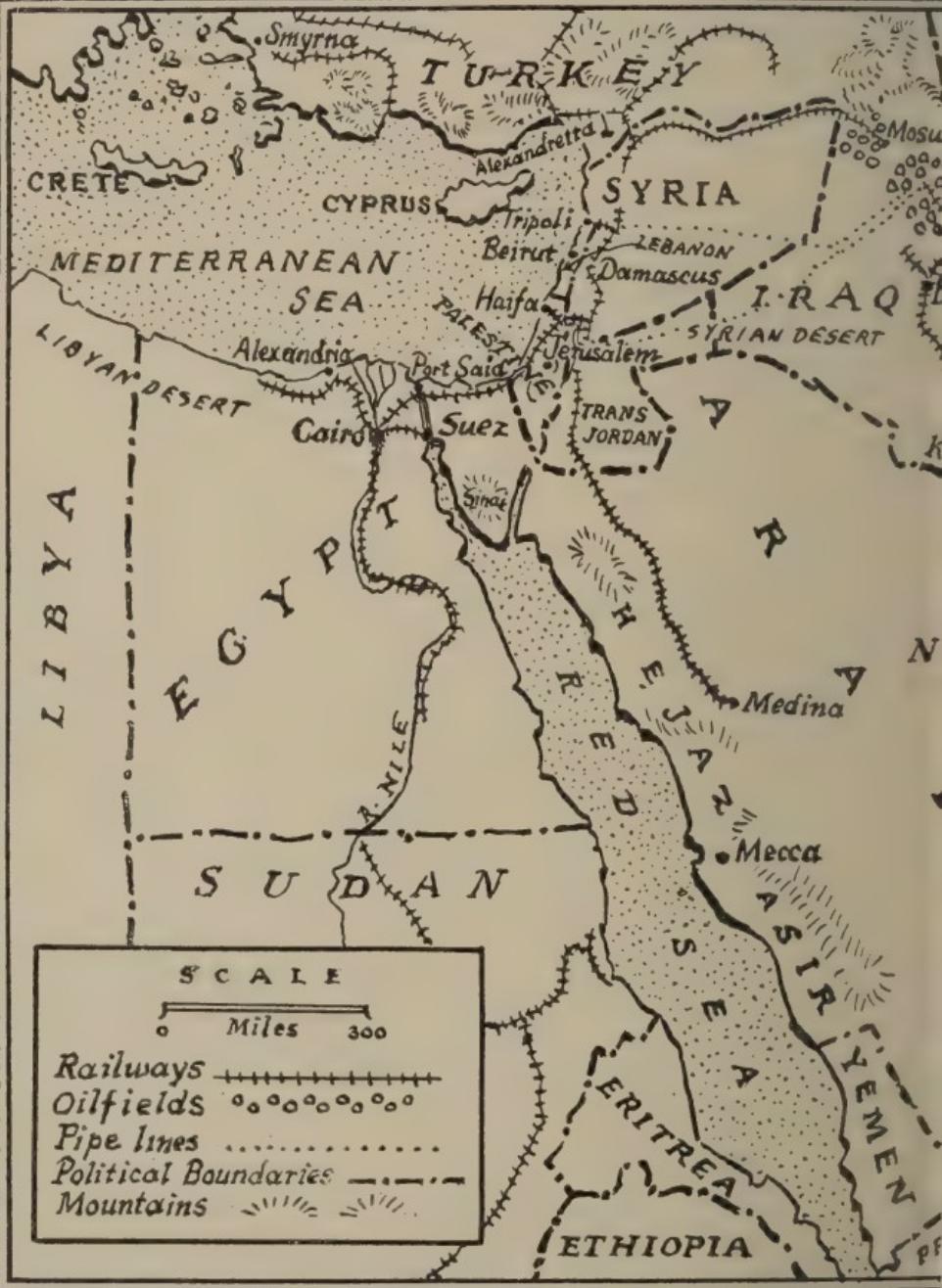
IRAQ

Iraq, west of Iran and north of Arabia, is almost as large as California and has a population of about 5,000,000. Formerly part of the Turkish Empire, Iraq was liberated by British forces during the last war and later put under British mandate. Britain developed Iraqi education, industry, social welfare, and self-governing institutions, and granted full independence to Iraq in 1930.

24.

When the stage for independence was reached, Britain and Iraq concluded a treaty of alliance "on terms of complete freedom, equality, and independence." Britain, pledged to defend Iraq from attack, was allowed to maintain her "essential communications" and to establish air bases in Iraq and naval access for strategic purposes—factors of paramount value to the cause of the United Nations during the present war.

25.





26. Apart from the short struggle in 1941, when German officers reached Baghdad and tried to organize a revolt there which failed, Iraq has cooperated in the fight against the Axis, and is today a member of the United Nations playing her full part. Her oil resources at Kirkuk are worked by an internationally-owned company in which four major oil groups, one being American, hold twenty-three and three-quarters percent each. The oil is carried in pipelines to Tripoli and Haifa on the Mediterranean coast, and in 1938 totalled about 4,000,000 metric tons.

TRANSJORDAN, SYRIA, LEBANON, AND PALESTINE

27. The four territories, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, form a geographic group stretching from the fertile coastal strip of the Eastern Mediterranean to Iraq and the Arabian Desert. Formerly under Turkish rule, they were constituted mandated territories in 1922, Transjordan and Palestine being mandated to Britain, Syria and Lebanon to France.

28.

Transjordan, roughly equal in area to Indiana and with a population—largely nomad—of about 300,000, was established as an independent Arab state in 1922, with an elected legislative assembly. Its constitution provides for a British resident adviser, and the country has made good progress, especially in health and education. The small frontier force, officered largely by British, has seen service during the war.

29.

Syria and Lebanon, under French mandate since 1922, were on their way to receiving independence when war broke out. Following the 1941 campaign in which British and Free French forces rid Syria of Axis sympathizers, the French authorities, with British support, proclaimed the independence of the Syrian and Lebanon Republics, and elections were held there in 1943.

30.

Palestine, smaller than Maryland in area, has a unique place in the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Under the Balfour Declaration, made in 1917 while Britain was liberating

Palestine from Turkish rule, Britain stated that it favored the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish National Home, while respecting the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish inhabitants. This Home was established, and the development of Palestine has been valuable in the Middle East war effort.

31.

The Mandate for Palestine, given in 1922, called on Britain to facilitate Jewish settlement and to develop self-governing institutions. In the

A Jewish settlement in the Valley of Jezreel.



twenty years which followed, the Jewish population of Palestine rose (mainly by immigration) from about 84,000 to 482,000; the non-Jewish (mainly Arab) from 668,000 to 1,132,000. As a percentage of the total, Jewish population rose from eleven percent to twenty-nine percent. The many riots in this period were connected basically with the claim of the Arabs of Palestine, that, at this rate, they would ultimately become a minority in their native country.

In 1937, the British Government attempted to meet the problem by proposing the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab States, with a British enclave. The details of putting such a plan into effect proved insuperably difficult at the time, and a subsequent round-table conference, called in London after further sustained riots, failed to yield any agreement between the parties concerned. In 1939, therefore, the British Government put forward a plan for a self-governing Palestine, setting 75,000 as the limit for further Jewish immigration without Arab consent, and proposing that Arab and Jewish Palestinians be given

32.

increasing responsibility in controlling government departments, with a view to full independence being achieved within ten years.

- 33.** The Jewish upbuilding of Palestine has been remarkably successful: desert land has been made to bloom, industry has been developed, health and education have gone forward, Hebrew has been revived and a Hebrew University established. At the same time, the Arab population of Palestine and surrounding territories has made great progress. There have been discussions of the possibilities of federation of the four contiguous areas—Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan.

STRATEGY OF VICTORY

- 34.** In 1940, when her own position was precarious, Britain threw her resources into the defense of the Middle East, striking a blow at the Axis which has been decisive for the outcome of the war.

In defending the Middle East from falling into enemy hands, British and Empire forces fought, from 1940 on, in Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somaliland, Greece, Crete, Malta, Iraq, Iran, and Syria.

35.

The threat to the Middle East countries came from the Italian Empire in Africa, an area twelve and a half times as large as Britain, held in 1940 by 1,000,000 Italian troops later reinforced by eight more Italian divisions and five German divisions. In capturing Tripoli, the last strong-

36.

British tanks ready to strike at El Alamein.



hold of the Italian Empire, British and Empire forces of the Eighth Army advanced nearly 1,400 miles in less than three months.

- 37.** When France fell in 1940, the British and Empire forces which were left to defend the Middle East appeared insignificant. In his first campaign in Libya, General Wavell's striking force never exceeded 30,000 men. In eight weeks he had taken 130,000 prisoners.
- 38.** The small British and Empire forces which liberated Eritrea, Somaliland, and Ethiopia from Italian rule destroyed an army of 300,000 men. Part of the victorious force advanced 1,725 miles in fifty-three days to take Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia.
- 39.** In 1942, with Japan surging forward from the East and Germany from the West, the stand of British and Empire forces at El Alamein was a major factor in preventing any possible joining of Axis forces across the Middle East area. From

the first day of the Eighth Army's break-through on October 23, 1942, the Middle East ceased to be an area for defense and became the base for attack and supply to the West, the North, and the East.

40.

A keypoint in the defense of the Middle East during the present war was the tiny island of Malta—a British colony—which held out for three years with the enemy only fifty-eight miles away and the nearest British base a thousand miles across the sea. Malta had more than 3,500 air alerts and 1,200 actual raids. It took the offensive itself as an air base during the North African campaign, and became General Eisenhower's headquarters for the liberation of Sicily.

TRIUMPH OF SUPPLY

41.

Vast supplies from Britain and the United States had to be brought to the Middle East over hazardous sea routes. With the Mediterranean closed until 1943, the sea route from Britain was

a journey of 11,000 miles. Up to April, 1942, more than 3,000,000 tons of military supplies were landed in Egyptian ports alone by this route.

42.

For urgent Middle East supplies, Britain pioneered an air route across Africa. Adding to pre-war British airports, new construction under difficult conditions was undertaken, developed later on a large scale by the Americans. These

Vital Allied supplies to Russia via Iran.



airfields are also vital routes to India and China for the war against Japan.

Through the defense of the Middle East, a most important supply route for Russia was made possible across Iran. British engineers, joined later by Americans, quickly increased the traffic capacity of the railroad. Locomotives and specially built freight cars were sent from Britain in 1941. The road system was modernized. A new factory for assembling trucks was turning out two hundred a month as early as the end of March, 1942.

43.

In **contrast with Nazi methods** of plundering occupied territories, Britain organized the Middle East Supply Center in April, 1941, to stimulate local production and satisfy civilian needs in the Middle East and beyond. This agency, controlled jointly by Britain and the United States since the summer of 1942, has had to cover an area larger than continental United States with a population of 83,000,000. New methods that have been introduced will be of permanent value to the whole region.

44.

45. To increase food production, the Middle East Supply Center has arranged for extensive surveys and the importation of agricultural machinery. The area under cereal crops has been increased by more than 2,000,000 acres. In addition, the Food Supplies Section has been handling bulk cargoes of foodstuffs, since 1942, at the rate of 1,000,000 tons and to a value of \$96,000,000 a year.

46. To combat locust plagues in the Middle East, an organization was set up under the general direction of the Anti-Locust Research Center of London to send tried poisons to all Middle East countries and to conduct new experiments. British, Russian, Indian, and Iranian entomologists concerted plans in Iran. Aircraft tracked down locust swarms and sprayed poison dust. From Ethiopia to Iran the program has been highly successful.

47. The Middle East has been stimulated to new industrial developments. Processes perfected in Egypt produce chemicals in Iran for dyeing and

tanning. Lignite mining has been developed in Syria and Eritrea to provide a substitute for coal. Fertilizers are produced from by-products of oil refining. Pharmaceutical products have come from Palestine where industries, largely developed by Jewish refugees, have greatly increased during the war period.

Throughout the war and most particularly since the opening of the Mediterranean in 1943, oil from the Middle East has been supplied in increasingly large quantities for the armies, navies, and air forces of the United Nations. All oil from British sources is supplied under British "Reverse Lend-Lease" or Mutual Aid.

48.

In supplying the Middle East with civilian goods, commercial trade is the normal method, with most cash imports coming now from the United States. This has changed the pre-war commercial balance, for in 1938 United States exports to the Red Sea area were only \$24,000,000 as compared with \$65,000,000 worth from Britain.

49.

50.

The economic development of the Middle East, and its increased trade with many countries of the world, will help to raise its standard of living after the war, and to secure, in the words of the Atlantic Charter, "improved labor standards, economic advancement, and social security for all."

British mobile clinic tours Syrian villages.



Production of Crude Oil and Natural Gasoline in the Middle East and in the Rest of the World in 1938

Middle East Metric Tons	Total World Production	Metric Tons
Iran 10,358,000	United States 170,432,000	
Iraq 4,368,000	Russia (incl. Sakhalin) 30,112,000	
Bahrein 1,135,000	Venezuela 28,107,000	
Egypt 226,000	Netherlands Indies 7,394,000	
Saudi Arabia 67,000	Rest (incl. M. East) 44,231,000	
<hr/>		
Total 16,154,000	Total	280,276,000

The Suez Canal

1. SEA DISTANCES FROM BRITAIN VIA SUEZ CANAL & CAPE

	Via Suez	Via Cape
Plymouth to Bombay	6,200 (Miles)	10,500 (Miles)
Plymouth to Sydney	11,200	12,300
Plymouth to Hong Kong	9,500	12,800
Plymouth to Singapore	8,100	11,400

2. SHIPS PASSING THROUGH THE SUEZ CANAL IN 1938

Nationality	No. of Vessels	Net Tons	Tonnage Percentage
British	3,028	17,357,743	50
Italian	984	4,625,818	13
German	499	3,134,597	12
Netherlands	476	3,028,324	9
French	260	1,747,825	5
Other countries	924	4,523,880	11
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Total	6,171	34,418,187	100

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